

The First Neapolitan Congress of Egyptology held in Naples, Italy in 2008, constitutes one of the former international projects promoted by the Neapolitan Association for Egyptological Studies (A.N.S.E.) and was devoted to the diffusion of most recent scientific and research activities carried out by Italian and International Universities and Research Institutes. The contributions span all periods and geographic areas of Ancient Egypt, spreading from the predynastic age to the Coptic era, with a particular focus on new, unpublished data. These include archaeological activities in the royal predynastic cemeteries in Hierakompolis and Abydos; new investigations in the Oasis, the Delta and the Red Sea; updated studies on the chronology, art, architecture and ideology of the Old, Middle and New Kingdom; textual and philological analysis of literary sources like the Pyramid Texts; and the latest researches in some of the most important sites of Sudan. The congress was also the occasion to draw attention to some unknown archaeological and textual material which comes from the Vesuvian Area and is kept in the Archaeological Museum and the National Library in Naples.

Recent Discoveries and Latest Researches in Egyptology



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Proceedings of the First Neapolitan  
Congress of Egyptology, Naples, June 18<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> 2008

Edited by Francesco Raffaele,  
Massimiliano Nuzzolo and Ilaria Incordino

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# Royal architecture and Pyramid Texts<sup>1</sup>: Some remarks on ‘Kingship’ in the III Millennium B.C.

Massimiliano Nuzzolo

## Introduction

Ever since their discovery by Gaston Maspero in 1880-1881<sup>2</sup>, the pyramid texts have aroused great interest and animated debate, which shows no signs of dying down today.

In the last 30 years scholars<sup>3</sup> have particularly focused on comparing the series of texts as they appeared on different sources, trying to isolate groups of texts transmitted together. Moreover, they approached the texts in order to provide their “topographical” context within the pyramid and not only their meaning. This method

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1 This article represents an augmented version of the paper I gave in the last X International Congress of Egyptologists (Rhodes, 22<sup>nd</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> May 2008) entitled “Sun Temples and Pyramid Texts: the King’s Progress in the Evolution of his Cult”. My special thanks go to Dr. Harold M. Hays who drew my attention to several aspects of the topic and kindly revised the English version of this paper. I’m also particularly indebted with Prof. Rosanna Pirelli and Prof. Giovanni Garbini for their useful suggestions concerning the evolution of the figure of Osiris in the Old Kingdom. Any mistake remains, of course, on my own responsibility.

2 Most of the texts of Unis, Teti, Pepi I, Merenre and Pepi II were published by their discoverer in the excavations reports on fieldwork in Saqqara pyramids edited in *Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et à l’archéologie égyptienne et assyrienne* n. 3-12, from 1881 to 1892, and later arranged in an overall volume (Maspero 1894). The first complete edition of the texts prepared by Kurt Sethe as a concordance of these five corpora, appeared in 1908-22 and was later revisited and updated by the same author in 1935-62 (see the bibliography). Although incomplete (other pyramids with pyramid texts were discovered in the first half of the XX century – Neith, Iput II, Udjebten and Ibi – and a new one as recently as 2001 – Ankhesepepi II) Sethe’s work is still considered the standard edition of the texts. Other important translations of the texts, which also include the most recently found texts (apart from those ones in Ankhesepepi II’s pyramid) are: Mercer (ed.) 1952; Faulkner 1969 (which is generally accepted as standard translation of the texts); Allen 2005 (contrary to Faulkner, where the texts are arranged according to the sequential number established by Sethe, in Allen they are set out in chronological order. For this reason Allen’s publication has been used in this paper for references to the translations of the texts). The only case of pyramid texts in a private tomb, namely the mastaba of Senwosret-ankh, comes from Lisht and dates back to the Middle Kingdom (see Hayes 1937). However, the fragmentary character of these texts and their non-royal nature besides they are almost contemporary of the first examples of Coffin Texts, do not allow us to consider them side by side with the other texts.

3 We must recall in particular the studies by Altenmüller (1972; 1974; 1986) and Leclant (1979a-b; 1997; 2001).

led them to stress the close link between the semantic – philological data and the archaeological – architectonic context. This is particularly the case when it comes to relate the individual spells to specific walls in the funerary chambers, an aspect investigated, in recent years, particularly by Allen, with new, stimulating results<sup>4</sup>.

On the base of the distribution of the individual texts in Unis pyramid, Allen explains the layout of these apartments as a scaled down version of the Egyptian cosmos (fig. 1), with a precise and rigid correspondence between funerary chamber=Duat and antechamber=Akhet. However, he completely excludes from his analysis the so-called *serdab*, as being devoid of inscriptions, and assumes to extend the “paradigm” of Unis pyramid to all the other pyramids<sup>5</sup>.

Nonetheless, as we can try to demonstrate in the present paper, such a “cosmographical” model, drawn on the Egyptian mythology of the other world<sup>6</sup>, while undoubtedly valid and borne out by considerable evidence, nonetheless presents many incongruities<sup>7</sup>, and is by no means homogeneous for all the pyramids endowed with this type of texts<sup>8</sup>.

4 Allen 1989. 1-28; Allen 1994. 5-28.

5 Allen 1994. 24-28. Although with other arguments, this correspondence had been already stressed by Spiegel 1971. 25. Abb. 2.

6 Truly, the Ancient Egyptians never elaborated a uniform cosmological-mythological model of the universe throughout their history. Different geographical, chronological, cult traditions always played a key role in this complex, long theological process. The result was, thus, a multiform, sometime chaotic, system that was never undoubtedly valid in every time and every part of the country. For this reason it is quite impossible to speak of a tidy and regular “religious system” in the Egyptian texts but rather of a “religious way of thinking” whose elements are not linked each other neither univocally nor unambiguously (see also Anthes 1959. 169-212). This seems even more valid in the Pyramid Texts that represent a mixed, complex, theological and mythological building. In this sense to speak of a cosmological model in the Pyramid Texts and consequent associations between architecture and spells is insofar misleading.

7 Osing 1987. 131-144, who also raises many doubts upon a real correspondence between funerary chamber/Duat and antechamber/Akhet.

8 In doing so, I shall restrict my analysis to the main pyramids of the V and VI dynasty, namely those of the pharaohs, leaving aside queens ones and the VIII dynasty pyramid of king Ibi because of the different layout of their substructure. As a matter of fact, the queens pyramids of the VI dynasty decorated with pyramid texts lack the classical three-chambers division of the funerary apartments: Neith and Iput II's pyramids still present the so-called *serdab* (uninscribed) to the east of the burial chamber while Udjebten's one only keeps a single room apart from the ascending corridor leading outside the pyramid (Jéquier 1933. 12-14. 46-47 and pl. II, XXXVI; Jéquier 1928. 1-5. pl. 1; see also Jánosi 1996. 113. 140-142). This peculiar layout of the substructure, with one room playing as burial chamber-antechamber (in the case of Udjebten also as *serdab*), seems to go as such against Allen's hypothesis. Why in fact don't the pyramids of the queens have a two-room division if this symbolic association was actually felt by the Egyptians? And how should we explain their single room: *3h.t*, *dw3.t*, both, or none of them? One may think that queens were not allowed to get the same architectural layout of their husbands pyramids but why, then, should they have taken advantage of such a fundamental element of kings pyramids? The question is even more complicated by the fact that also the VIII dynasty pyramid of Ibi (Jéquier 1935. 3-4 and pl. 1; see also Jánosi 1996. 50-51)

In doing so, I will approach the texts mainly from an historical – sociological viewpoint, trying to show how their historical and conceptual meaning should have been more important than their specific placement in the funerary chambers since their final aim was not, or not only at least, to delineate a cosmographical model but simply to sketch and, in the same time, eternize a new image of the king by means of the written word.

### 1. Text sequences and layout

According to Allen, the underlying concept in the pharaoh's journey into the other world, i.e. resurrection and union with the god Ra and the eternal pole stars, passed through two phases, modelled on the eternal solar cycle. In the west the deceased king is united with Osiris in the Duat/funerary chamber, to be reborn in the east, after crossing the horizon of Akhet/antechamber as the spirit *ꜥh*, and shine once again as Ra and eternal star through the ascending corridor, in the morning sky in the north (fig. 1).

The identification of the king with Osiris is echoed in the rituals of the funerary chamber which refer to the king as “Osiris Unis”<sup>9</sup>, while in the antechamber and ascending corridor the king, after completing the journey with the sun in the celestial boat, is assimilated to numerous divinities, principally the primeval god Atum, the Sun and the Stars.

In this itinerary, each space in the funerary apartments seems to take on a precise cosmological aim, that is further confirmed, in Allen's analysis, by the direction of the hieroglyphs (fig. 1), which always go from east to west but the north walls, where they are oriented from west to east because of their facing outwards, the key direction for king's journey to the afterlife<sup>10</sup>.

Allen also classifies two main types of texts in the burial chamber, i.e. resurrection texts in the southern part and offering texts in the northern<sup>11</sup>, while the west gable, taking on apotropaic formulas designed to protect the mummy, is

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shows a single room plan, apart from the serdab, in the funerary apartments and in this case we are not dealing with a queen.

9 More recently M. Smith has suggested a new approach to the problem of the identification of the king with Osiris (see Smith 2006). According to him, we should speak of Osiris in these formulas as a kind of spiritual notion placed at the same level of other important concepts of the deceased king like the *ꜥh*, the *bꜥ* or the *kꜥ*. In this sense the formula Osiris NN does not seem to imply a direct identification of the king with the dead god of Abydos but rather an indirect relationship between the two “characters” in which Osiris stands on a upper level presiding over the king as god of the underworld. In fact, Smith says, we should speak of an “Osirian component” of the deceased (the specific Osiris of the specific King NN) rather than an identification of the king with the god Osiris as such. Simply put, Smith concludes, the king does never completely merge into Osiris in the Pyramid Texts.

10 Allen 1994. 5-12.

11 Protruding also on the east gable and called “response to the offering ritual spells”: *Ibid.*, 28-30.

considered separately on account of its isolation from the rest of the funerary chamber by means of the palace façade-motif which takes up the west wall<sup>12</sup> (fig.1).

If we bear in mind the conceptual model we outlined above, in which the substructure of the pyramid is seen as reflecting the other world, we would expect to find a precise correspondence between the individual funerary chambers and the key words in the Egyptian cosmogonic and cosmological vision. Such words were pre-eminent in conveying the values of that model, above all the names of the divinities, like “Ra” and “Osiris”, place names like “Akhet” and “Duat”, and also particularly important religious concepts such as those associated with the semantic field of the word “*ꜥḥ*”<sup>13</sup>.

The latter, referred to above, is connected to both the transformation and transfiguration of the king from inanimate being and inert body, belonging in darkness and the underworld, namely the funerary chamber, to a “transfigured and revitalised spirit” who has reached the celestial world, i.e. the antechamber/ascending corridor.

Thus, in the first chamber we guess to find clear allusions to the concept of Duat as the place of fusion with the regenerative forces, and with Osiris, but also to a chthonic, subterranean dimension of the other world and the king. At the same time we do not expect to find any, or at most only very few, allusions to the solar dimension or the concept of *ꜥḥ*, since the *bꜥ* of the deceased in the Duat has not yet been “akhified”. In the antechamber and the descending corridor, on the other hand, one expects to find texts with a solar and astral significance, as well as mentions of the deceased as *ꜥḥ* ready to make the celestial ascent.

In fact, however, a careful and comprehensive analysis of all the texts from the royal pyramids often confronts us with a different reality. First of all, the deceased, both in the form of the mummy identified with Osiris and as a revived corpse, is always invoked as *ꜥḥ*. This is associated with a luminous dimension, often at odds with the chthonic, subterranean context of the burial chamber where, nonetheless, we can often find the relative mention<sup>14</sup>.

Also the concepts of luminosity and darkness, evoked by the words *jꜥḥw* and *kkw*, and symbolically closely inter-related with the images outlined above, are notably inconstant on the walls of the two subterranean chambers, showing no precise or rigid topographic distinction as to the relative semantic spheres<sup>15</sup>.

Moreover, as clearly demonstrated by Assmann, in all Egyptian mortuary texts and funerary liturgies (labeled as *sꜥḥw* texts) from New Kingdom on, the reference to Ra did not depend on whether the recitation was done, in ritual practice, during

12 *Ibid.* 12-18. In a very recent work, Harold Hays (Hays 2009. 47-94) proposes to divide the texts in the burial chamber into four groups that he calls “personal” and “sacerdotal”, each of them respectively divided into several subgroups. On the meaning of the palace façade-motif in Unis pyramid see also De Trafford 1997. 271-283 and particularly 274-275.

13 On the concept of *ꜥḥ* see Englund 1978 and Jansen-Winkel 1996. 201-215.

14 Osing 1987. 138-142 and Abb. 4-5 (Text C).

15 Englund 1994. 169-180. See also Friedman 1984-85. 39-46.

the day or at night nor on the placement in a specific “daily” or “nightly” ritual space inside the tomb<sup>16</sup>.

“This should warn us”, he says, “against classifying spells according to the occurrence of specific gods”, as well as “following « Osirian » and « Heliopolitan » traditions” in the writing of the text. Taking into account the great continuity and close parallels between pyramid texts and later texts, this paradigm, Assman concludes, “may be also true as early as the pyramid texts”<sup>17</sup>.

We also find a considerable thematic variety in the west gable, which for Allen should feature, more than anywhere else, standard texts on account of its separation from the rest of the chamber. Although we follow Allen in distinguish the pyramid of Unis, featuring the above-mentioned apotropaic texts, from all the others, where one would expect to find texts defined as “Spells for entering the Womb of Nut”<sup>18</sup>, this paradigm does not correspond at all to what is actually found on the walls.

Above all in the case of Pepi I and II, we find spells which have nothing to do with Nut. To give just a few examples from what could be a long list, in Teti, PT 335<sup>19</sup> (T/S/Wg<sup>20</sup> § 546a-c), we read:

*How beautiful is the sight of Teti,  
with headband from the Sun’s brow,  
his kilt on him from Hathor,  
his plumage a falcon’s plumage,  
as he goes forth to the sky among his brothers the gods*

and in Pepi I we read, PT 436<sup>21</sup> (P/S/W § 788-789):

*You have your water, you have your inundation,  
the outflow that comes from the god,  
the decay that comes from Osiris.*

16 Assman 1990. 1-45.

17 *Ibid.* 7-8.

18 This difference has been recently pointed out by Allen in his last updated collection of the pyramid texts (Allen 2005. 17-18 (Unis spells 1-18), 67-70 (Teti spells 1-22), 100-110 (Pepi I spells 1-63), 211-215 (Merenra spells 1a-57), 241-251 (Pepi II spells 1-59).

19 Allen 2005. 70 (spell 20).

20 From now on code as follows : W/...Unis – T/...Teti – P/...Pepi I – N/...Pepi II Neferkare – .../S/...sarcophagus chamber – .../A/...antechamber – .../P/...passage between sarcophagus chamber and antechamber – .../C/...corridor leading out of the antechamber – .../.../N, S, E, W...north, south, east, west walls – .../.../Eg, Wg...east gable, west gable.

21 *Ibid.* 104 (spell 30).

*Your arms have been washed and your ears opened up:  
this controlling power has been akhified for his ba.*

The question is particularly problematic in the case of the key terms of cosmological symbolism referred to by Allen, namely Akhet and Duat. Mathieu<sup>22</sup> has shown how, in the case of the pyramid of Unis, there are some texts which seem to contradict Allen's interpretation, such as PT 271<sup>23</sup> (W/A/S § 389b-390b):

*Horus and Seth shall take the arms of Unis and take him to the Duat.*

The collocation of this sentence at the eastern end of the south wall of the antechamber, over against the outer wall of the so-called *serdab*, and not in the funerary chamber, as would be logical in Allen's cosmographical scheme and also according to the mention of the Duat in the text, seems to be a further evidence of our initial hypothesis.

Indeed, Mathieu identifies the *serdab*, which Allen completely ignored as being devoid of inscriptions, with the so-called "Osiris Enclosure" (*Hwt Wsjr*) or "Portal of Nu" (*ʿrrwt n(j).t Nww*), a sort of second Duat or rather a place where the deceased, according to what we learn from analogous coffin texts and later funerary texts from the New Kingdom, descended to after arriving at the eastern end of the Akhet<sup>24</sup>.

However, this theory raises some doubts since, as Mathieu has to admit, there is no explicit reference in the pyramid texts of Unis to Osiris Enclosure or Cave (*tpht*). He suggests that it should have been the "Big Enclosure" - *Hwt ʿ3t*, cited only once in another text, PT 268<sup>25</sup> (W/A/S § 373b-c), also situated at the eastern end of the south wall of the antechamber, but Allen<sup>26</sup> identified this structure with the temple of Ra in Heliopolis, an interpretation that is also borne out by Hannig<sup>27</sup>.

Besides, and more significantly, in the pyramids of Teti, Pepi I and Pepi II, the abovementioned formula (PT 271, § 389b-390b) occurs in completely different contexts, and not over against the *serdab*. In Teti the sentence, while being preceded and followed by passages which are wholly analogous to those from Unis pyramid, is situated at the western end of the south wall of the antechamber (T/A/S)<sup>28</sup>.

22 Mathieu 1997. 291.

23 Allen 2005. 50 (spell 178).

24 Mathieu 1997. 292-295.

25 Allen 2005. 49 (spell 175).

26 *Ibid.* 427. Faulkner instead did not suggest any interpretation of the term maintaining a literal translation "Great Mansion" (see Faulkner 1969. 77).

27 Hannig 1995. 516.

28 Allen 2005. 84 (spell 178).

In Pepi I the utterance is inscribed at the northern end of the east wall of the vestibule (P/C/E), namely the last and outermost room of the sub-structure of his pyramid<sup>29</sup>; in Pepi II the spell is placed on the west wall of the antechamber (N/A/W), namely immediately on leaving the Duat towards which the spell in question purports to lead the king<sup>30</sup>.

In the same way we can point to “anomalies” in the presence of the word Akhet in an architectonic and symbolic context at odds with what we would expect. In the pyramid texts of Pepi II, for example, there are at least two spells, situated on the west wall of the burial chamber, in which reference is made to Akhet in connection with the funerary chamber: in PT 627B<sup>31</sup> (N/S/W § 1782a-c) we read:

*he has reached the Akhet with a leading uraeus in his first birth*

and more clearly still in PT 664B<sup>32</sup> (N/S/W § 1887a-b):

*Horus is here within your arms so that he may tend you.*

*He has become akh again with you in your identity*

*of the Akhet from which the sun emerges.*

Thus, in many cases one simply cannot find a precise or rigid correspondence between the funerary apartments and the other world. This may be less evident in the case of Unis, where there are fewer albeit significant exceptions. But in the other pyramids, particularly the last royal pyramid erected in the Old Kingdom, that of Pepi II, there is evidence of significant freedom in situating the sentences<sup>33</sup>.

It could be likely the length of time that elapses from the first introduction of the texts which played a part in this, as they gradually escaped from the original “display” criteria and turned into a sort of literary *topos* whose substance came to matter more than location.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that we could speak of a “written topography of the other world” which is more conceptual and symbolic than simply “geographical”<sup>34</sup>.

29 *Ibid.* 189 (spell 178).

30 *Ibid.* 282 (spell 178).

31 *Ibid.* 245 (spell 32).

32 *Ibid.* 250 (spell 84).

33 See also Hays 2008-09. 47-94.

34 In this sense see also Beaux 1994. 1-6, who points out the multiform meaning and nature of the Duat: “De cette petit étude il ressort que la duoat peut être vue temporellement comme l’aube, spatialement comme un espace céleste ou terrestre, que sa nature est évoquée comme celle d’un corps d’eau, et que sa fonction concerne les astres qu’elle entoure pour le faire disparaître tout en leur permettant d’accomplir, invisibles, leur chemin vers le renaissance puisqu’elle les met

In fact, each text seems to possess its own “dignity”, its symbolical and conceptual autonomy, and describes progressively the complex religious and cosmological universe of the Egyptian other world, capturing all its facets and implications and expressing in several ways what the deceased expected to be in the otherworld and how he could have symbolically reach that world joining the gods and being an eternal star forever<sup>35</sup>.

However, we can not exclude that a real, unmistakable correspondence between the mythical components of the Egyptian other world and the architectonic elements of pyramid substructures was not the only or indeed main guideline used in elaborating the pyramid texts, just as it is not for their comprehension<sup>36</sup>.

## 2. The meaning of the texts: royal ideology and funerary architecture

We shall try to understand this aspect of the issue beginning from the conclusion of the above-mentioned paper by Mathieu: “Si l’on songe que l’innovation capitale que constitue l’introduction de textes à l’intérieur des appartements funéraires est quasiment contemporaine de l’adoption d’un nouveau plan, avec serdab à trois « niches », peut-on douter que le programme d’inscription n’ait été spécifiquement conçu pour rendre plus explicite, et donc plus efficaces, l’organisation de cette infrastructure?”<sup>37</sup>.

To answer this question we must briefly consider the development of kingship during the III millennium BC. Since the first appearance of the funerary complexes in the pre-dynastic period, the main purpose of the royal tomb was to make the king’s existence and cult eternal as well as his symbolic being on the earth<sup>38</sup>.

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ensuite au monde. Elle est donc décrite à la fois comme temps et lieu de transition, moyen et milieu où l’astre peut se préparer à reparaître”.

35 This may also account for the fact that in the very late VI dynasty the texts were no longer the exclusive prerogative of the pharaoh, but “invaded” the subterranean chambers (which were in fact just one, see note 10) of the queens. In this sense, it’s very likely that a certain standardization of contents and conceptual “mannerism” would have led to greater freedom in the placement of the texts in the funerary chamber.

36 The Duat/Akhet couple of geographic terms was chosen as if they were captions or labels to specific rooms in the funerary apartments. However, this correspondence is not drawn from passages which are explicitly or implicitly intended to identify architectural features. On what basis, then, do we select just this couple of geographic terms to determine the “meaning” of a room? Why are not other geographic terms considered? Why are not the burial chamber the *sh-t-htpw* and antechamber the *sh-t-j3rw*, for example? Both are very frequently quoted in the texts of the respective rooms of the funerary apartments and could also perfectly fit with the type of texts of those rooms which are connected, according to Allen’s reading of Unis pyramid, with offering rituals (burial chamber) and resurrection rituals (antechamber). On the meaning of the abovementioned terms *sh-t-htpw* and *sh-t-j3rw* see also Hays 2004. 175-200.

37 Mathieu 1997. 298.

38 Baines 1999. 126.

This funerary tradition was closely linked to religious beliefs permeated by a chthonic, dark, descendent dimension whose origins can be traced without interruption to the Neolithic period<sup>39</sup>.

This religious tradition was particularly related to the old dead god of Abydos, *Hnty-Imntyw* (Foremost of Westerns), later identified with Osiris as we can read in PT 670<sup>40</sup> (P/S/W – N/S/S § 1980-81):

*How beautiful is the sight,  
how satisfying to see the sight of Horus  
giving life to his father [and extending]  
authority to Osiris as Foremost of Westerns*

or PT 677<sup>41</sup> (N/C/E § 2020-21a):

*Ho Pepi Neferkare, raise yourself!  
Receive for yourself your privilege  
that the Dual Ennead has made for you  
and be on Osiris's throne  
as Foremost of Westerns replacement.*

By the architectural viewpoint, this custom was likely carried out through the great funerary enclosures of the early dynastic period<sup>42</sup>. Quite later, certainly

39 Cervellò-Autuori 2002. 46-47.

40 Allen 2005. 267 (spell 348).

41 Ibid. 277 (spell 412).

42 Although the real meaning of the so-called “Talbezirke” is still far from clear, we can not have any doubt about the funerary aim of these impressive structures (see for example Helck 1952. 72-85; Kemp 1966. 13-22; Kaiser, Dreyer 1982. 242-260; O’Connor 1989. 51-86) although it should not have been the only one (Nuzzolo 2007b. 228-229). These “funerary implications” of kingship were surely connected to *Hnty-Imntyw* often identified with the jackal-god Anubis (Griffiths 1980. 5, 106). The identification of Anubis with *Hnty-Imntyw* is also documented in many pyramid texts as for instance PT 81 - § 57a-e or PT 224 - § 220b-c. For an overview of the matter in private context see Begelsbacher-Fischer 1981. 19-31. 50-52. 121-125). On the other hand, the presence in some of these enclosures of a number of boats should not be exclusively considered as a link with the solar cult, unlike the IV dynasty pyramids, neither a proof of a solar main significance in the afterlife of the king (O’Connor 1991. 5-17). That these funerary buildings in Upper Egypt, particularly those at Abydos, might be the direct prototypes of the Djoser complex, is instead still matter of debate (in this sense see Kaiser 1969. 1-21; for a contrary opinion see Stadelmann 1996. 787-800).

beginning from the III dynasty, a new religious concept, coming from the northern part of the country, has been developing which was linked to a solar, celestial, shining, tradition that we could well define solar/astral<sup>43</sup>, although the two spheres never merged completely while the sun being a step up from stars as clearly stated by several pyramid texts<sup>44</sup>.

The solar kingship reach its climax during the IV dynasty with the great architectural projects of Snefru and Khufu<sup>45</sup>. The introduction of the *z3-R<sup>c</sup>* title by Djedefra and the building of the Sphinx with its temple<sup>46</sup> were other bricks added to this “theological building”<sup>47</sup> which strongly separated the ruler from the political and social “environment”, emphasizing the divine nature of the king and the ascendant rather than the descendant, regenerative elements.

Indeed what seems evident in the whole decorative-architectural program of the pyramids was the lack not only of any osirian element but also of the funerary aspect “strictu sensu” that was, as such, the basic element guaranteeing king’s rebirth and his eternal life. Although it should have been likely provided by the cult-practise and theological ideology of the time, this funerary element had been given less

43 The development of the “solar conception” of kingship is still matter of debate among scholars. Although the real “solar kingship” was definitively established only in the IV dynasty, in the III dynasty many clues seem to suggest a solar significance in kingship although they are not immediately linked to the royal pyramid. For example the appearance of the name of Ra as not just the word for sun but as the name of a god, that also became a personal name (king’s official Hesyra), or the building of a cult shrine for the god in Heliopolis. More problematic is instead the interpretation of a supposed solar altar in the northern part of Djoser funerary complex (Goedicke 1957. 152-154; for a contrary opinion see Stadelmann 1983. 373-378). Although this altar does not seem to denote a solar-temple (see the recent hypothesis by Kahl 1994.81-83, who interpreted it as a pavilion of the Sed-festival), Djoser complex can be certainly considered the first monument to equate the king with the sun god for a great deal of elements. More recently (Kahl 2007), the German scholar goes one step further maintaining that the cult of the sun god Ra could date back the very early dynastic period and was given a particular emphasis by king Peribsen. Nevertheless, a stellar significance of the funerary complexes/pyramids both in the pre-dynastic period and the early Old Kingdom can not be ruled out as seems to be particularly demonstrated by their name (*Htp-shmwy*’s tomb is called *Hr-h<sup>c</sup>-(m)-sb3* – “Horus rises as a Star” – Djoser’s pyramid is called *Hr-sb3-lntj-pt* – “Horus is the Star at the head of the sky” – and still in the IV dynasty Djedefra’s pyramid is called *Shdw-Ddf-R<sup>c</sup>* – Starry sky of Djedefra. See Helck 1984. col. 4-5).

44 Although the identification of the king with the stars is clearly documented in several texts (see for example the next page in the present paper), the sung god Ra remains by far the most important deity of the Pyramid Texts side by side with Osiris. In fact, Ra and Osiris are depicted as a real alter ego of the king representing the actual core of his religious-eschatological system while the stars only occasionally take part in it. The statistic account of their mentions in the pyramid texts significantly confirms this difference

45 Among the latest studies see Stadelmann 1985. 80-123; Stadelmann 1997. 1-16; Hawass 1995. 221-229. 249-253 with further bibliography.

46 On the identity of the Sphinx and the king who built it see Nuzzolo 2007b. 238, n. 104.

47 Stadelmann 1985. 124-126 ; Dobrev 1999. 3-28. For a careful synthesis of the topic see also Quirke 2001. 115-128.

importance than the main aspect of the royal ideology, the solar one, both in architecture (pyramid-shape and solar suggestion) and art (scenes of the king who strikes the enemies and triumphs over the forces of chaos assuring order and wealth to the country and gaining the celestial dignity)<sup>48</sup>.

The building of the sun temples, and the split of cult-places for the king, points up the solar ideology stressing, in a dual fashion, the merging of the ruler with the god throughout the decorative-architectural program<sup>49</sup>. In this context we can record some new images of the pharaoh, namely the first example of the sed-festival scenes or a depiction of the king wearing the *3tf* crown and bearing the horn. This low-relief, coming from the so-called south corridor in the sun temple<sup>50</sup>, echoes PT 245-246<sup>51</sup> (W/P/S<sup>52</sup>§251b-252b) which describes the king in these terms:

*May you look upon Osiris's head as he governs the akhs,  
while you yourself stand far from him:  
you are not of them and you will not be of them.  
This Unis's stance as a ram with two wild-bull  
horns on his head has been seen.  
For you are a black ram, (Unis), son of a black ewe,  
whom a white ewe bore and four sheep suckled".*

The solarization-divinization of the ruler is thus achieved. In the private context, however, the osirian element was much more evident and likely deep-rooted in the cult-practise, at least according to the textual evidence, from the beginning of the V dynasty<sup>53</sup>.

48 Nuzzolo 2007b. 238-240.

49 Nuzzolo 2007a. 1407-1408 and fig.4.

50 Bissing (Hrsg.) 1928. pl. 22. nr. 352-353.

51 Allen 2005. 40-41 (spells 156-157). See also Faulkner 1969. 58-59.

52 Also in Teti, Pepi I and II pyramids: T-P-N/S/S.

53 The attestations of Osiris in private funerary context are still matter of debate: Winfried Barta suggests a very early date of Osiris in the beginning of the IV dynasty although he himself has to admit that there is no positive evidence of the name of Osiris before the late V dynasty (Barta 1968. 287). This chronology was supported by many other studies among which we can particularly recall: Cherpion 1989; Bolshakov 1992. 203-210; Bolshakov 1997. 24-121. The latter goes one step further when he points out that the first well dated mentions of Osiris are not to be found before the beginning of the VI dynasty. Quite recently, however, Michel Baud has argued that the first mention of the dead god of Abydos could date back the very beginning of the V dynasty even not the end of the IV dynasty (Baud 1999. 12. 517-518). The mention comes from the tomb of princess *Hm.t-Rc* in the Giza necropolis whose so early date in the

At the end of the V dynasty, within about fifty years, and in the same period of the disappearance of the sun temples, the figure of Osiris suddenly takes up again a great importance for the idea of kingship from a figurative point of view with the reign of Djedkara (the first representation of the god of Abydos known to us comes from the upper temple of his pyramid<sup>54</sup>) as well as from a textual point of view with the pyramid texts of Unis. In these texts Osiris plays a central role together with the funerary, underground, regenerative expectations and demands which Osiris presides over as lord of the dead<sup>55</sup>.

Even according to a simple numerical reckoning of records, the god of Abydos seems to prevail over the god Ra, either as Osiris NN<sup>56</sup>, the deceased king going down into the Duat and assimilated to the god (in this respect see also note 9), or as simple deity, namely the father of the living king Horus to whom the latter addresses particular offering formulas and protective spells to favour his resurrection journey<sup>57</sup>.

This trend is going more and more increasing throughout the VI dynasty but a real balance between the two deities was actually never reached as is clearly shown by the fact that we have no text where a complete merging of the king with the sun god may be surely documented. On the contrary the continuous being of the king into Osiris and/or Horus is markedly stressed by the texts.

Taking Osiris from the private context, where he already had a primary role, and bringing him back to the royal paradigm<sup>58</sup>, the V-VI dynasty theology focuses on the funerary, regenerative features of the rising of the king, at the same time intending to reduce king's divine nature and his solar traits while including him in a more complete, balanced eschatological-religious system<sup>59</sup>.

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IV-V dynasty had been already supported by Hassan 1950. 43-65; Porter, Moss 1974-81. 243-244; Harpur 1987. 243-268. nr. 168; Begelsbacher-Fischer 1981. 302. nr. 628

54 Griffiths 1980. Frontispiece and 236-237. We must bear in mind, however, that Osiris is here represented as only one of the many deities around the king in a long procession and he did not stand out in any way. It is only in the pyramid texts that he will be arising as main god for pharaoh's afterlife.

55 Altenmüller 1984. Col. 16-17. See also Kees 1952. 123-139.

56 On the topic see also note 11 in the present paper.

57 This numerical reckoning has, however, to be treated with great caution. If we only take into account the mentions of the two gods we can notice that Ra always "prevails" over Osiris while the situation is completely different if we would also consider the King as Osiris (Osiris NN). Osiris, in all his form and epithets, is in fact quoted more than 350 times while Ra somewhat more than 200. The latter seems thus to be the most important form of the god of Abydos that clearly tip the scales in his favour. I may conclude that we should made a distinction between Osiris as such and his royal counterpart or character but the subject is so vast and complicated to give here more than a mere outline. A more in depth analysis of the topic is, however, being prepared by who is now writing. For the pyramids of Unis, Teti, Pepi I, Merenra and Pepi II see also Allen 1950.

58 Altenmüller 2000. 310-316.

59 See also Barta 1981. 136-150.

In the same period, several changes also occurred within the pyramid temple concerning the decorative program and, as a consequence, the ideological meaning of the temple itself. In the innermost room of his complex, the so-called “funerary offering hall”, the ruler is no more represented while sitting among the gods but he receives a procession of dignitaries and residents of the pyramid town bringing a great deal of food offerings<sup>60</sup>. This phenomenon is clearly evident in Pepi II’s pyramid temple<sup>61</sup> but, taking into account the close similarity in the decorative program with the pyramid complexes of his predecessors, there is room for thinking that this trend was developing since the beginning of the VI dynasty (see also fig. 2 for a schematic resume of the matter).

### Conclusion

At the end of the V dynasty a meaningful religious transformation seems to come about deeply changing the cult-ideological idea of kingship. On the one hand, what concerned the celestial destiny of the king-god, both in ritual and ideology, was brought into the funerary apartments where the written word would have ensured king’s rebirth. On the other hand, as to the “earthly” destiny of the king, if we can call it this way, it was celebrated in the pyramid temple which has become a kind of “eternal royal palace” where the reign of the ruler was intended to last forever.

This aspect of the royal cult could also help us to explain the introduction of the so-called *serdab* during the reign of Djedkara, namely just before the pyramid texts were written. The king may have intended to bring within the funerary apartments the most important element for his rebirth, namely the cult-statues that should have directed towards themselves (and thus towards the living images of the king) all the regenerative, vital forces later also evoked through the effective power of the written word<sup>62</sup>.

60 Stadelmann 1985. 200. As stated by the German scholar, while excluding the divinities from his “sanctuary” the king would have presented himself as the only god of the funerary offering room. But the reality which the king had to come to terms with was completely different: in representing “common people” offering for his *K3* into the *Holy of Holies* of his pyramid the king was trying to guarantee for the eternity his political power which was in fact probably slipping out of his hands.

61 Jéquier 1938. 53-66 and pl. 61ff.

62 The tripartite layout of the funerary apartments is not new in the pyramids for it seems to date to the predynastic period (Stadelmann 1991. 373-387). What is really new is the shape of the room with three niches that is documented only in the case of Menkaura and Shepseskaf’s pyramids, both with 6 niches (quite different is the case of Userkaf’s pyramid whose funerary apartments certainly show a strange layout but miss any niche). This peculiar form led Stadelmann to think that this room should have represented a kind of cenotaph or better “sokarischen Begräbnis” for the pharaoh in the place of the later “Osireion” (*Ibid.* 385-387). Leclant also stressed the rough, almost summary shape of the room whose walls and ceiling were not covered neither with stars nor with texts. This room/magazine may have been thus

Therefore, coming back to Mathieu's question, we can not doubt that an actual relationship between the new architectural planning of pyramid substructure and the introduction of pyramid texts does really exist.

However, their "edition" and inclusion in the funerary beliefs of the king seems to serve different purposes: although, on one hand, it appears to accomplish a pragmatic task in making clearer and more effective the layout of this substructure directing, and maybe also reproducing, the king's celestial journey of resurrection, as stated by Allen and Mathieu, on the other hand, it seems to have mainly had symbolic-ideological functions in defining and establishing (for the king and, of course, for the life and prosperity of the country), the conceptual image and nature of the pharaoh, namely the theoretical and ideological bases of the Egyptian State embodied by the ruler.

By means of these texts the king was to achieve his eternal life accomplishing and guaranteeing his theological legitimacy as we can read in PT 305<sup>63</sup> (W/A/E<sup>64</sup>§ 475a-c):

*Indigent is the heir who has no writing:*

*Unis writes with his big finger,*

*he does not write with his little finger.*

Before the end of the V dynasty, these ideas had probably been confined to the architectural-decorative characteristics. They had been firstly expressed by means of the pyramids (III and IV dynasty) and, afterwards, also through the sun temples (V dynasty).

It seems to be a complex, winding road where each "step", and in particular the sun temples, might have played only a temporary, brief role, although an important one, in a cult-ideological-religious system of which the pyramid texts may have represented the last outcome.

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devoted to keep funerary materials rather than statues of the king that better suited the funerary temple (Leclant 1979b. 286. n. 6 and also Mathieu 1997. 294). Nevertheless it's just the odd, almost unfinished nature of this room (that resembles that of a cavern or *tph*, the name used in the Abusir Papyri to define the room with 5 niches in the funerary temple), which seems to testify a similar meaning and function of the two chambers in whose niches, then, a real simulacrum of the king-god could have been placed.

63 Allen 2005. 57 (spell 210).

64 Also in Pepi I and II pyramids: P-N/A/N.

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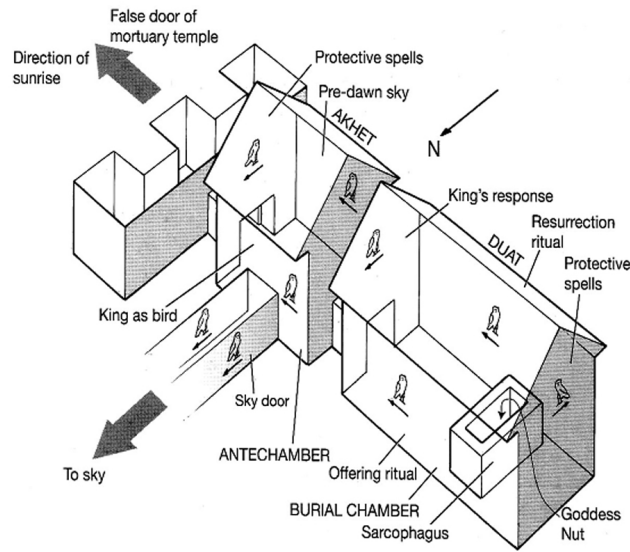


Fig. 1. 'Cosmic geography' of the funerary apartments of Unis Pyramid according to Allen. Drawing by Mark Lehner (after Allen 1994).

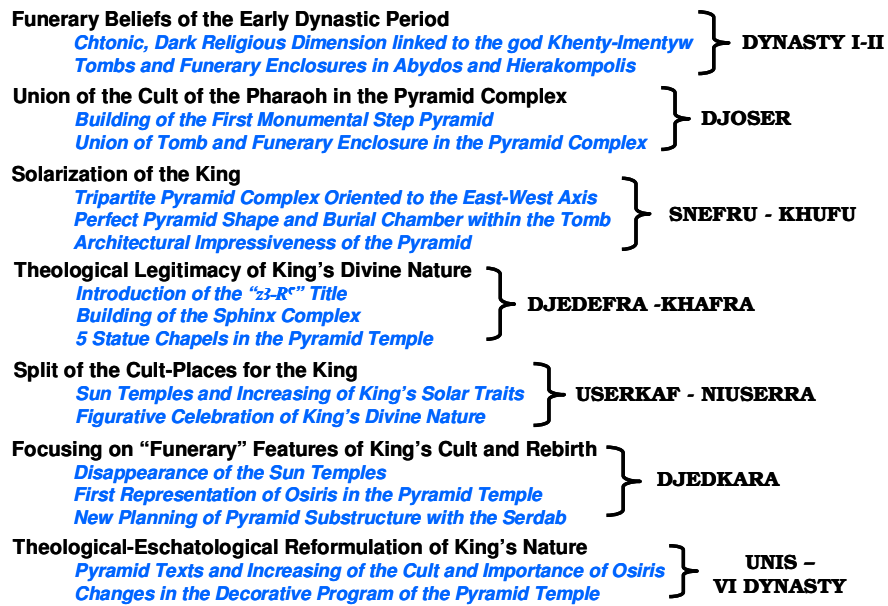


Fig. 2. The development of 'royal ideology' during the III millennium B.C.